

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

McPherson County Courthouse

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Northwest corner, Maple and Kansas

CITY, TOWN

McPherson

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

No. 4, Garner Shriver

STATE

Kansas

CODE

20

COUNTY

McPherson

CODE

113

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☒ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

McPherson County

STREET & NUMBER

McPherson County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

McPherson

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kansas 67460

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

McPherson County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

McPherson

STATE

Kansas 67460

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1970

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kansas State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Topeka

STATE

Kansas 66612

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

___EXCELLENT
XGOOD
___FAIR

___DETERIORATED
___RUINS
___UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

___UNALTERED
XALTERED

CHECK ONE

XORIGINAL SITE
___MOVED DATE_____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The McPherson County Courthouse was constructed from limestone quarried near Strong City in Chase County in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The courthouse is symmetrical on axis measuring 104 feet long and 71 feet wide. It is three stories with a half basement and rises to a height of 80 feet with a central tower rising to 105 feet. The central tower which is square in plan projects forward from the building and serves the combined function of a bell and clock tower. The main entrance to the courthouse is located at the base of the tower and accentuated by a Syrian arch. This central tower is flanked on either side by smaller octagonal towers. These towers are also repeated in the rear of the building. The six windows on the ground floor in each of the octagonal towers have a stilted arch and the voussoirs are cut from the same limestone. The frieze at the top of these towers is a billet moulding crowned by a limestone balustrade around the bottom of the spire. The windows on the third story of the building, except for those in the tower, have stilted arches. The windows in the basement have a flat arch formed with limestone voussoirs. All other windows are rectangular with limestone lintels. There are slight projections centered on the north, south and west facades of the courthouse. The projection on the west side emphasizes the secondary entrance which is set above the ground, level with the top of the voussoirs on the basement windows. A flight of eight stone steps leads to this entrance. There are tall, rectangular stone chimneys to either side of this projection. A limestone string course runs entirely around the building forming a sill for the second story windows.

The central projections on the north and south facades end in a wall dower with a Serliana motif in the peak. The windows align on the two stories and the basement and give the appearance of thin vertical strips. The four second story windows to either side of the central projection are arched. The two windows on the first story of the projection and octagonal towers are also round-headed, while the remaining windows have flat arches. The roof is hipped and covered with slate.

The courthouse is located on a densely planted square. The county jail which had been built at the same time as the courthouse on the square was demolished in 1960 for a parking lot. A modern building has been constructed on the square to the north of the courthouse.

Modern alterations have included the lowering of ceilings, redecoration of offices, installation of window air conditioners and replacing the front and rear entrances. The slate roof was given major repairs in the early 1950's. The third floor is no longer fully used.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1893-1894

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John G. Haskell

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The McPherson county courthouse was designed by John G. Haskell of Topeka, one of the most prominent early Kansas architects, and constructed in 1893-1894.

McPherson county had been organized in 1870 and the county seat established at Sweadahl. After two months an election was held for a new county seat. Lindsborg was the victor but held the honor only three years. Another election was held June 10, 1873, and the newly formed town of McPherson was selected by an overwhelming majority of the voters. The county offices were located in donated or rented facilities in McPherson for the next 21 years. With the settlement and development of the county, the county offices also grew. An effort was made to pass a \$75,000 courthouse bond issue in 1886, but it was defeated 2,147 to 1,556. By 1889 county offices were scattered up and down McPherson's Main street, making it unhandy for those having courthouse business. In 1889 the commissioners rented the McPherson Opera House, using all of the building but the main hall.

On March 9, 1893, a petition was presented to the county commissioners calling for another bond election, \$40,000 for a courthouse and \$10,000 for a county jail. At a special election on May 23, 1893, voters narrowly approved the courthouse bonds 1,152 to 1,013 and the jail bonds 1,112 to 981. Perhaps the closeness of the vote can be better understood in light of the country's poor economic situation in 1893.

The three county commissioners--G. F. Byers, E. C. Tyler and George S. Bishop--visited a number of county courthouses in eastern Kansas during July and interviewed a number of prospective architects that same month. John G. Haskell of Topeka and his associate J. F. Stanton were chosen to prepare the plans and specifications, and by September 1, the plans had been turned over to the commissioners. Bids for construction were received October 5 but all were rejected. Some modifications were made and bids were taken again in November. On November 23, 1893, the general contract for construction was let to James Jack of Hutchinson for \$32,594. The completion date set by the contract was October 31, 1894. Frank Dillon was awarded the contract for excavation work and for hauling the stone. A. G. Linn of Freemount was appointed by the county commissioners to supervise all stone and brick work.

By spring of 1894 the construction was well underway. A large number of men, primarily stonemasons, were at work on the building. The cornerstone ceremonies were held May 10 and by early June the workmen were completing the walls of the third story. In August slate was being placed on the roof. Although the courthouse was up by the end of September it was not finished inside. Most of the work was done by mid-December and some of the county officers began moving in. The commissioners, however, did not formally accept the building until January, 1895.

Originally the clock tower had clock faces on the four sides but no clock. Around 1908 a popular subscription raised around \$1,200 to purchase a clock.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

8.

In addition to the regular courthouse functions the building housed the high school classes in 1910 while the high school building was under construction, the city library for a time and the meetings of the American Legion post.

Built in 1893-1894 when hard times had brought building materials and skilled labor to the lowest price level in many years, the McPherson county courthouse exhibits a quality of workmanship and construction which could not be duplicated today. The courthouse is a landmark structure in McPherson, having served as the center of county government for more than 80 years. Also, the Romanesque-styled building is the work of a prominent 19th century Kansas architect, John G. Haskell, and an excellent example of the craftsmanship of 19th century stonemasons.

9.

Peterson, Linn, "The McPherson County Courthouse and Clock Tower," Leaflet distributed by the McPherson County Historical Society during the Centennial Homes Tour, June 3, 1972.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"The Courthouse," The McPherson Republican New Century Pictorial Edition, Mar. 1, 1901.
(Supplement to the McPherson Republican.)
McPherson Republican, July 14, 28, Aug. 4, Sept. 1, Oct. 13, Nov. 17, 24, 1893; Jan. 5,
April 27, May 11, 18, June 8, Aug. 17, 24, Sept. 21, Dec. 14, 1894; Jan. 25,
Feb. 1, 1895.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one

UTM REFERENCES

A 11 4 6 1 6 3 1 2 4 2 4 7 4 9 0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
D
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard D. Pankratz, Director, Historic Sites Survey

ORGANIZATION

Kansas State Historical Society

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

120 West Tenth Street

TELEPHONE

(913) 296-3251

CITY OR TOWN

Topeka

STATE

Kansas 66612

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Nyle H. Miller

TITLE

Executive Director

DATE

August 2, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

SALINA 35 MI.
LINDSBORG 14 MI.

616

40'

617

618

56

McPherson County Courthouse
McPherson, Kansas

UTM Reference

14 616312 4247490

